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Your Reference: SKG/P18498GB
Application No: GB 0205159.7

The Patent Office
Patents Directorate

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12 August 2002

Dear Sirs

**Patents Act 1977:
Combined Search and Examination Report under Sections 17 and 18(3)**

Latest date for reply: 3 July 2003

I enclose two copies of my search and examination report and three copies of the citations.

By the above date you should either file amendments to meet the objections in the report or make observations on them. If you do not, the application may be refused.

Publication

I estimate that, provided you have met all formal requirements, preparations for publication of your application will be completed soon after 26 November 2002. You will then receive a letter informing you of completion and telling you the publication number and date of publication.

Amendment/withdrawal

If you wish to file amended claims for inclusion with the published application, or to withdraw the application to prevent publication, you must do so before the preparations for publication are completed. **No reminder will be issued.** If you write to the Office less than 3 weeks before the above completion date, please mark your letter prominently: "**URGENT - PUBLICATION IMMINENT**".

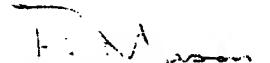
[†]Use of E-mail: Please note that e-mail should be used for correspondence only.



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Yours faithfully


Peter Mason
Examiner

Important information about combined search and examination

I also ask that you take note of the following points. These might have a bearing on the future stages of your application because the examination report has been sent to you before your application has been published.

- (a) You may file voluntary amendments before making a full response to my examination report. We will publish with your application any new or amended claims you file voluntarily or as a full response, provided that they are received before preparations for publication are completed. It would help us when you file amendments before publication if you could prominently indicate in a covering letter whether or not the amendments are intended as a full response to the examination report.
- (b) If you file a full response to the examination report before your application is published I will consider it as soon as possible. However, if this would disrupt the publication of your application, I would have to delay taking any action until the application had been published. This delay could be up to 3 months, depending upon when we receive your response.
- (c) There is another situation when there might be a delay between you filing a full response and the Patent Office responding to it. This would arise if you met all my objections but your application had not or had only recently been published. I could not report the outcome of my re-examination until I was satisfied that the search was complete for documents published before the priority date of your invention and that anybody interested in the application has had three months following publication of the application to make observations on the patentability of your invention.
- (d) Provided that the requirements of the Act have been met, I can send your application to grant as early as three months after publication. Before doing so I will bring the original search up to date and raise with you any further objection that might result from this top-up search. However, there is a possibility that at that time I may not have access to all the patent applications published after the priority date of your invention and of possible relevance to your application. If this is the case I would have to complete the search after grant and if necessary raise any new found novelty objection then.



Application No: GB 0205159.7
Claims searched: 1-18

Examiner: Peter Mason
Date of search: 12 August 2002

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Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.T): G3N:

Int Cl (Ed.7): G05B: 13/02, 13/04

Other: Online: EPODOC, JAPIO, WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
A	EP 0,602,855 A1 (AT & T CORP.) See whole document	-
A	EP 0,443,249 A2 (AT & T CORP.) See whole document	-

X Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
& Member of the same patent family	E Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.



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Combined Search and Examination Report under Sections 17 & 18(3)

Clarity and support

1. The exact operation of the method claimed in claim 1 is unclear because of ambiguities in the terminology used to define it. Line 14 of claim 1 refers to 'predicting a current random correction value...'. This would appear to be a contradictory statement as by its definition a random value cannot be predicted. This phraseology is further used to define the invention in independent claims 5 and 17 and throughout the description.
2. It is unclear if the correction value generated in lines 17-18 of claim 1 is necessarily the correction factor computed in line 4 of the claim. Claim 5 is similarly unclear.
3. The phrase 'making the neural network learn...' as used in lines 20 of claim 1 and 5 would appear to be defining the invention by the result to be achieved, as it does not contain any integers that clearly define how the neural network learns.
4. It is unclear what is meant from the term 'tracking' as used in lines 20 of claim 1 and 5.
5. No definition is provided in claim 2, 6 or 7 as to the function denoted by (n). Further it is unclear as to what a 'section' is, as denoted by (W).
6. There is no antecedent in the prior claims to 'the production system' of claim 4. It is further unclear from claim 4 as to whether it is the semiconductor device or the production system that are of 'variable kinds on a small scale', this latter statement being ambiguous in meaning.



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[Examination Report contd.]

7. The scope of claims 8, 11, 17 and 18 is ambiguous as there is no definition provided as to what is meant by the terms reticle, PPID, BASE 1 and BASE 2.
8. The scope of claim 9 and 17 is ambiguous as it is unclear as to what is meant by the phrase 'guessed in accordance with a priority of remaining history constituting elements among processing data having identical reticle.'
9. It is unclear as to what is meant by the term 'relative value' as used in line 5 of claim 10 and line 20 of claim 17..
10. The scope of claim 12 is ambiguous as it is unclear as to what is meant by the phrase 'requesting the proceeding of a sampling process when even the bias component cannot be guessed.'
11. Line 30 of claim 17 referring to the 'predicted bias component' is inconsistent with line 20 of the claim, in which the bias component is 'guessed'.
12. The introductory pages should be brought in line with the claims as settled.